

LMS RESPONSE TO HEFCE CONSULTATION ON OPEN ACCESS IN THE POST-2014 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

Question 1

Do you agree that the criteria for open access are appropriate (subject to clarification on whether accessibility should follow immediately on acceptance or on publication)?

Broadly yes, but see the following comments

Do you have any comments on this proposal?

Criterion a. Why limit this to UK HEI repositories? In mathematics (a fortiori in physics and to a less extent computer science and other mathematical sciences) papers are usually submitted to the international repository arXiv.org. If mathematicians are required to keep this and some UK HEI repositories in step, the requirement will both increase their workloads and possibly introduce inconsistencies.

We do not see the value in a poor duplication of this system through setting up institutional repositories and cross-referring them to other repositories. The costs of setting up individual repositories on a national level would be better spent, in terms of the mathematical sciences, in supporting the existing arXiv where papers already receive the widest possible readership. If one wishes to promote interdisciplinary subjects within a particular university through having a single repository where, for example, mathematicians might browse through biology papers, this seems an unrealistic aim and would not extend beyond the one HEI; there are cheaper ways of encouraging academics to work together.

It is a pity other disciplines have not, as far as we know, developed equivalents to arxiv. For the user, it is far more likely that a single international repository will be regularly consulted than that a large number of individual HEI repositories will be monitored. Moreover, such a system reduces interoperability and searchability issues, and could perhaps save money on the infrastructure, as HEIs might need fewer technical staff to maintain the repositories.

We therefore believe the criterion should be amended to allow an international, national or UK HEI repository, and believe UK funding bodies should actively promote and support establishment of repositories similar to arXiv for other disciplines.

We appreciate that "through UK repositories" would permit links to the arXiv or other electronic documents: for us, this is essential.

Criterion b: We note that this affects LMS members as authors and the Society as a whole as a publisher. Members will welcome this, which already often happens in mathematics (using arXiv.org). The LMS generally permits posting of accepted versions on the arXiv and author home pages or their institutional repositories, the exception being the recently-launched Transactions of the LMS, which is Gold open access only.

However, as a publisher, we are concerned that this could undermine our subscription model and thus the long-term viability of our journals. We have preliminary evidence that papers whose preprint versions are on the arXiv are less frequently read than those papers where there is no arXiv version. (It is understandable that librarians consider the 'cost per download' when choosing which journals to pay for and journals with low downloads are cancelled first, regardless of quality.)

In past assessments, we have enabled all panel members to have free access to research works published by LMS and submitted to the REF and would expect to do so in future: however, we do not see why submission to the REF should entail general open access.

Criterion c: We are concerned about this, as it may facilitate plagiarism. We are also aware that some colleagues work with non-academic writers who make their living from royalties etc and thus are very sensitive about copyright issues: making re-use possible may damage such collaborations. Overall we feel search is desirable but re-use (of the exact text) is not: we do not know whether such a separation is technically feasible.

Criteria for post-2014 REF

Criteria a and c are fine.

Criterion b may suggest too short a period given the long publication timescales in some areas of mathematics.

Question 2

Do you agree with the role outlined for institutional repositories, subject to further work on technical feasibility?

Should the criteria require outputs to be made accessible through institutional repositories at the point of acceptance or the point of publication?

Do you have any comments on these proposals?

We do not understand the need for institutional repositories to have a special role, or its benefit (though it may give a way of monitoring date-stamps). For REF purposes, a better rule would be that the publications must be available via the repository of the HEI submitting the author in REF.

While we accept the virtues of access being at the point of acceptance (plus relevant embargo period), we note that there can be significant delays between acceptance and publication. We also note that such a practice may become confusing in citations, which usually give the date of publication rather than acceptance. This could become even more confusing if we give the date of paper publication of a journal which appears earlier in electronic form.

Question 3

Do you agree that the proposed embargo periods should apply by REF main panel, as outlined above?

Do you agree with the proposed requirements for appropriate licences?

Do you have any comments on these proposals?

All articles published in the LMS's journals are freely and universally available from the publisher's site for the first six months after publication. Thereafter they move behind the subscription wall. This is the opposite of an embargo on access, and should perhaps be allowed as an alternative. There is no embargo period that would be acceptable for us to permit free access to the final published version unless the paper is published under the gold open access model after payment of an APC.

It has been recognized that the usefulness of research in the arts and social sciences lasts a very long time and evidence for this longevity is based on the long period of cited half lives of research articles. The same is true of mathematics. All of our journals published for more than twenty years have cited half lives greater than ten years. In 2012, the Proceedings of the LMS had a cited half life of 33 years. Evidence was provided to a workshop in Berkeley held in 2011-2 that the reading pattern of our journals matched the citation pattern which provides further evidence that continued access to the old articles is highly valued by mathematicians.

We can only support sustained access and regular file updating, to ensure the older articles can be read in current formats, through the current payments to the journal from the subscription model. We recognize that an embargo period to match the citation half life of our journals would be unacceptable for REF, but six or twelve months embargo periods are far too short. It has been recognized that green open access requires a healthy subscription model to support the costs that are otherwise unpaid by the research funder through the gold route. It is critical, therefore, that embargo periods be linked clearly to citation half-lives, and thus the sustainability of journals themselves, rather than pursuing a one-size-fits-all approach. We would consider 3-5 years to be a more appropriate embargo period.

Concerning licences, please see in our answer to Question 1 our concerns about re-use which affect members as authors. As a publisher, our authors are required to grant us an exclusive licence or copyright to enable us to publish their papers. It is not only we who require this licence; generally, it is a part of our contractual obligation with the publishing distributors of our journals such as Oxford University Press. As such, the author may not unilaterally issue, for example, a CC-BY-NC licence which would conflict with the licence granted to us.

Question 4

Do you agree that the criteria for open access should apply only to journal articles and conference proceedings for the post-2014 REF?

This seems reasonable. There are relatively few outputs in other formats submitted in mathematics, and we see no need for these to be open access. Indeed, in the case of monographs this would severely affect their production since most are firmly copyrighted and attract royalty payments.

Do you have any comments on this proposal?

No comment

Question 5

Do you agree that a notice period of two years from the date of the policy announcement is appropriate to allow for the publication cycle of journal articles and conference proceedings?

Do you have any comments on this proposal?

No comment

Question 6

Do you agree that criteria for open access should apply only to those outputs listing a UK HEI in the output's 'address' field for the post-2014 REF?

Do you have any comments on this proposal?

In REF, one assumes that all outputs submitted will have an author currently employed at the HEI submitting him or her. However, the outputs may have been produced while this was not the case, for example while the author was in another institution, or industry or commerce, or another country. That gives rise to several problems. The publication may be in a medium for which green open access is unavailable, public funds to enable gold open access may not be available to the author, or the medium may not allow open access of any kind. Moreover, if gold open access were adopted widely by the UK, this could restrict REF submission to those who can get the necessary funds from their institutions or elsewhere.

Generally we believe that if funding bodies wish to promote open access beyond what is required to run an efficient REF, then they should pay the APCs for all work submitted to the REF that is not already paid for by RCUK or other funders and, as a consequence, benefit from the reputation of research that is published through the universities they fund.

We also note that if such a criterion were adopted beyond REF, it would fail to capture the right population: it would include postgrads at the HEI, whether home or overseas and whether attracting RCUK or HEFCE funds or not, postdocs not paid via the institution, visitors, and retired staff, whereas the principle as we understand it is to ensure open access to all *publically-funded* research.

Question 7

Which approach to allowing exceptions is preferable?

If selecting option b: Do you agree that the percentage targets are appropriate? Do you believe the percentage target should apply consistently or vary by REF main panel?

Do you have any comments on these proposals?

We prefer option a.

Since we cannot predict what percentage of outputs submitted will not be able to be readily made open access, we believe that on a first occasion it is important not to create problems by a poor guess. We therefore prefer exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

28/OCT.